

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, May 13, 1993**

2:30 p.m.

Date: 93/05/13

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

MR. SPEAKER: Let us pray.

We give thanks to God for the rich heritage of this province as found in our people.

We pray that native-born Albertans and those who have come from other places may continue their work together to preserve and enlarge the precious heritage called Alberta.

Amen.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition signed by approximately 1,500 Albertans collected through Royal Canadian Legions across the province calling on the Alberta government to maintain senior citizen rental grants and homeowner tax grants for seniors.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have further petitions signed by 87 Albertans calling on the government of Alberta to act "immediately and before the next election, to reduce pension benefits" available to MLAs and cabinet ministers prior to leaving office.

head: **Notices of Motions**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give oral notice of the following motion:

Be it resolved that further consideration of any or all of the resolutions, clauses, sections, or titles now before the committee shall be the first business of the committee and shall not be further postponed.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Fish Creek, follow by Lesser Slave Lake.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give notice of a motion under Standing Order 40. At the end of question period it's my intention under that order to seek unanimous consent of the Assembly to approve the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the winners of the YWCA's 12th annual tribute to women awards. Included among the winners are Nancy Betkowski, a former member of this Assembly, for her contribution to public affairs and communications; Cora Molstad for her contribution to the arts and culture; Doreen Ryan for athletics, recreation, and fitness; Edith Cheriton for her involvement in business, management, and professions; Linda Hardy and France Levasseur-Ouimet for community service; Deborah Kully for her contribution to health, science, and technology; and Alice Mah for her work in the social sciences and social services.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 15(6) to give notice with respect to your ruling yesterday regarding the contempt. I propose to move the following motion for the consideration of the Assembly:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly act to safeguard its authority, practices, and procedures by directing the Deputy Premier to rectify his conduct of releasing partial 1993-94 budget detail prior to tabling in the Assembly by forthwith tabling in the Assembly copies of all such documentation released to Progressive Conservative candidates.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, we'll have an interesting discussion when we get to that point.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I would like to file with the Legislative Assembly six copies of a news release that indicates that we have reached a tentative agreement with the largest subsidiary of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. This follows on the heels of two previous agreements with subsidiary 8 and subsidiary 5. I also would indicate the delight that we feel at the progress that has been made in reaching a collective agreement, which yet has to be ratified, but we're delighted with the progress that has been made.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table four copies of the paraphrasing of the interview that I had with Bill Kaufmann of the *Calgary Sun* yesterday. I'd like to state that I had never said homosexuality was criminal, and I was misrepresented on that comment. In fact, discrimination against anyone, including gays and lesbians, is unacceptable to myself and to this government. I would like to make the record clear, and I will submit these four copies for Members of the Legislative Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly 19 students from the Erle Rivers high school in Milk River, the grade 8 class. They're accompanied today by their teacher and by four parents. This is a particularly great pleasure for me in that not only was I a student at this school, but I also had the privilege of teaching for five and a half years before coming to the Assembly. In fact, the teacher for the group today, Mrs. Marjorie Cronkhite, was a colleague of mine through part of that period of time. In addition to that, one of the parents today, Mrs. Charlotte Blust, was a student while I was teaching in the school, and two more of the parents, Mrs. Anne Stelten and Mrs. Gail Hummel, while somewhat younger than I, were in that general age group. Only one of the parents gets off the hook by not having been associated in those early years, and that's Mrs. Nohra Barragan. I would ask the group from Erle Rivers high school to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three introductions today. First, there's a group of 29 students from the Two Hills high school in the public gallery. They're accompanied by their teachers Marv Hackman and Mr. Gerald Kostyniuk. I'd ask that those students and their guests rise in the gallery to receive the warm welcome of the members.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce two people who work very hard for the people of the Vegreville constituency. My office manager, Sheila Naeth, and STEP student Charlene Krill

are here to observe proceedings today. I'd like them to stand and be welcomed by members of the Assembly.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I've had the pleasure of sitting beside and working with the Member for Edmonton-Highlands for seven years. Government members have had to cope with her incisive wit in debate and challenge that she possesses. Can you imagine what her mother, Terry Barrett, has put up with for 39 years? She's in the gallery. I'd like her to stand and be welcomed by members of the Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today for me to introduce 27 students from the John Barnett school in the constituency of Edmonton-Belmont. They're accompanied by their teacher Mr. Gerard Collins and parents Mrs. Nadine Triska, Mrs. Patricia Lougheed, and Mr. Martin Healey. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

head:

Oral Question Period

Health Care System

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have to direct this to the Deputy Premier, whoever it is. It's in regard to statements made last night by the Premier, who again was musing, I guess, as he says he does from time to time, and talked about user fees in the Alberta health care system. The symbolism as I heard it on the radio this morning was so vivid. There it was, the Premier speaking to well-heeled Tories, \$300 a plate, talking about illness taxes on the poor and the sick; at the same time, in Calgary no Tory candidates out at a forum about child poverty. Think of the symbolism. I want to say that the Premier has clearly drawn a line about what the coming election is about. I want to ask the Deputy Premier: how can the Deputy Premier justify – I take it the Premier is speaking for the government – an additional tax on the sick when this government absolutely refuses to tax their rich Tory friends?

2:40

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, we've seen so often in this Legislative Assembly that the leader of the New Democratic Party takes statements out of context totally, and he's done that again this time. One only has to look at the comments that have been made on a consistent basis by the Minister of Family and Social Services and the Minister of Health whereby we have indicated a priority for those that are needy within our society, and we're going to continue with that priority.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I want to know from this government: is the Premier just going out talking to rich Tories and not bringing in government policy? He said clearly that they want to look at user fees. I want to know from the Deputy Premier: is he speaking for the government or not? Are you advocating user fees, yes or no?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, what we have done since the present Premier assumed that position on December 5 is a broad consultation with all Albertans, because unlike the opposition parties we appreciate the input that we receive from all Albertans. So it's natural that we are going to have discussions with Albertans, and we're going to continue, contrary to what the opposition advice is, with that consultation with Albertans.

MR. MARTIN: Consultation. Here he is talking about user fees to well-heeled Tories, Mr. Speaker, \$300 a plate. Some consultation. He talked clearly about user fees.

My question to the Deputy Premier is simply this: what is the fairness of no new taxes for wealthy Conservatives but a new tax – we already have the premiums – on the sick, the poor, and the unemployed? What is the fairness of that?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, again, a deep misrepresentation by the leader of the New Democratic Party. As the Provincial Treasurer indicated within our budget, there are no new taxes. Let me repeat: there are no new taxes, contrary to what the New Democratic Party wishes to do. They want to tax, tax, tax, tax. We want to make sure we provide an environment within this province whereby individuals can prosper and do well, because we recognize that governments are not the creators of wealth but the private sector is.

Caucus Policy Committees

MR. MARTIN: I'd like to go back to the Deputy Premier, whoever is in charge of this one, Mr. Speaker. The estimates released yesterday show how much this government is abusing the taxpayers of Alberta for partisan activity. The department of agriculture is spending \$114,000 on a Conservative caucus policy committee, and the Department of Family and Social Services is spending \$75,000 on another Conservative caucus committee. The Treasurer talks about lean, mean government, and here all these Conservative backbenchers who couldn't get into cabinet are getting extra salaries, perks, and taking it out of departmental budgets. I'd say that it's abuse of government money. My question is simply this: how can the Deputy Premier justify paying for Conservative caucus activity out of departmental budgets?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, again, contrary to what the New Democratic Party wishes to do, we want to make sure that we do a thorough job of consulting with Albertans. The Premier did away with some 26 committees within our caucus. We've established four, whereby we are having an opportunity for broader public input. In addition to that, the Premier reduced the size of his cabinet from some 26 to 17 members. We followed through with a comparable reduction as it relates to support staff within this Legislative Assembly of some 30 percent. In addition to that, we have reduced the public service through the voluntary severance allowance by some 2,700. We've reduced. We've lived up to the commitments that the Premier has made consistently. More importantly, we want to make sure that the Alberta population has an opportunity for input into the decisions that this government makes.

MR. MARTIN: Well, isn't that important. So you give them all cars, extra money. That's really important for consultation; isn't it, Mr. Speaker? Some kind of lean, mean government.

My question on this. If you want to do it, take it out of the Conservative caucus budget, not out of the departmental budgets you're cutting back. I ask the Deputy Premier: why didn't they do that, take it out of their own Conservative caucus budget – they don't need to pay them extra money – and do the same consulting, not out of the departmental budgets?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, my response to that would be that we recognize the important role that the four chairmen of the standing policy committees play. Now, if the hon. Leader of the

Opposition is suggesting we take it out of party funds, I would suggest that his party examine the role that he plays in this Legislative Assembly, because they're much more effective than he is, and if he thinks that they should be paid, maybe his supplementary allowance should be paid from the New Democratic Party.

I would also suggest that the minister of agriculture supplement this.

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition obviously fails to share also that on the same page is a reduction of \$221,705 in this budget. Now, if we're replacing \$221,000 with \$113,000, that's a pretty significant saving.

I think the hon. member also fails to realize the role that standing policy committee chairmen are making in formulating government policy and dealing with the public. Many of these meetings are open to the public, and I have yet to see a member of this party take an interest in policy in this government.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly my point: \$114,000 more for the backbenchers and he says he's cutting his budget. That really makes sense to Albertans. That's precisely the point. Thank you for the answer.

I'd like to direct this to the Treasurer. He's the one that's now going to be talking about massive cuts, lean, mean government, what a great guy he is in cutting the deficit. I want to ask him about the symbolism of this, Mr. Speaker. How does he justify putting forward estimates which include thousands of extra dollars for Tory backbenchers at a time when he's cutting everybody else back?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, what we have put forward is a plan, a four-year plan to balance the budget with action in the first year by reducing the deficit by 22 percent, nearly \$690 million, nearly \$700 million. That's a significant reduction in the size of the government's deficit. I want to make it clear that the hon. member across the way has made it clear where he stands. We have a plan. The leader opposite says that his only plan is to increase taxation, while the leader of the Liberal Party has absolutely no plan whatsoever. We have said: there are not going to be any tax increases; there will be no new taxes and no sales tax. The hon. member across the way has talked about only raising taxes, no other plan but raising taxes, while the hon. member from the Liberal Party has made it clear that they are going to raise taxes, especially as it relates to sales taxes. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

MR. SPEAKER: Order. [interjection] Order, hon. member. You asked your two questions. You can ask the chairman another day. [interjections] Order. Hon. members, if you'd like to go out the back and have a cup of coffee, including the Member for Smoky River plus his keen participants in conversation from the New Democrat caucus. It would be nice if you did it outside.

Calgary Centre for the Blind

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, at a fund-raising luncheon today representatives of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind informed those that were attending the luncheon that the CNIB wishes to build a centre for blind people in Calgary. They informed those attending the luncheon that for the second year in a row, in spite of the CNIB asking for access to lottery funds, the

government has turned them down. Representatives also told those attending that there are now some 7,000 Albertans that are clients of CNIB and that in seven years it is expected that there will be 11,000. My first question to the Deputy Premier in charge of lotteries is this: can the Deputy Premier tell Albertans why the CNIB has been turned down a second time for lottery funds to build a centre for the blind in Calgary?

2:50

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I've had discussions with fund-raisers for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind in the last year, year and a half. The request made to the government was for assistance under the community facility enhancement program, and the request was always in the \$2 million to \$4 million to \$6 million range. The previous program that expired sometime ago had an annual cap of \$250,000 per year. Under the new program that came into effect January 1, 1993, the cap is \$125,000 per year for a particular project. I informed the representatives that I had talked to from the CNIB some year, year and a half ago that that was the funding parameter we would have to deal with. We simply were not in a position to provide the multimillions of dollars for this project. We were, however, prepared to do everything possible to assist with funding under the community facility enhancement program. I've not had a further discussion with representatives from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind in some period of time now.

MR. TAYLOR: How do you equate that with \$300,000 for the Barrhead golf course?

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Edmonton-Glengarry, not your backbencher.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Deputy Premier to explain to Albertans how priorities can allow for tennis courts to be built and not for something as necessary as a centre for the blind.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, let me make it very, very clear that we'd be very, very prepared and very, very anxious to work with the fund-raisers of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Let me make it very, very clear. But under the parameters of the community facility enhancement program there is a cap, and that cap has not been violated. I've also said that I'd be very, very pleased to sit down and talk to the representatives of the CNIB to further any alternative forms of fund-raising, and I personally would assist them in the fund-raising if they so asked. If a tennis court applies for \$40,000 and it's accepted that that's within the cap, it's provided. We were prepared to provide \$250,000 maximum funding per year under the old program. The request was for an amount that was between 10 and 20 times above that, and that would clearly have violated the parameters of that program.

MR. DECORE: Mr. Speaker, it is my recollection that the minister was able to find a way to look after the building of the Y centre in Calgary.

I simply ask the minister this: is the minister prepared to immediately meet with the people from CNIB to find some way to access lottery dollars or CF moneys or whatever to get this blind centre going?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, I thought that I had already said that in the previous two responses, that I had already done it, that I was prepared to do it, that I was anxious to do it.

CFEP moneys and lottery moneys, Mr. Speaker, are one and the same. There are no two separate programs. The maximum amount of dollars on a cap under the current community facility enhancement program is \$125,000 per project per year. The YMCA in Calgary and also the YMCA in Edmonton, going back three and four years ago, received funding when the cap on the program was a maximum of \$250,000 per year.

MRS. HEWES: That was three years ago.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's correct, and a different program, Mr. Speaker. The parameters of the program have been changed, and all members know that. That was announced a considerable amount of time ago. Because of the fiscal realities of the province of Alberta and because of the criticisms, including those which have come from the Liberal Party, saying why is this a Tory slush fund, we downsized the program from \$100 million to \$75 million, the maximum annual allocation from \$250,000 to \$125,000.

I am prepared to work with any fund-raiser from the CNIB to try and get this project off the ground.

MR. SPEAKER: Fort McMurray.

Uranium Contamination of Lake Athabasca

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Environmental Protection. On several occasions I've raised a concern through to the minister and his department with regards to the cleanup of the possible contaminants at the Gunnar mine site located on Lake Athabasca. While this is under Saskatchewan's jurisdiction, I understand the minister has recently attended a meeting of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment in Regina. I'm wondering if he's able to finalize any details in this regard, because Lake Athabasca is a very valuable resource to northern Albertans, in particular to the residents of Fort Chipewyan.

MR. SPEAKER: Environmental Protection.

MR. EVANS: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed I was in Regina on Tuesday for a meeting of western provincial and territorial ministers and then for the full CCME, Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, yesterday. I did bring up the issue of Gunnar mines and the uranium contamination of Lake Athabasca in my meetings on Tuesday and received I think a very thorough report from the minister of the environment for Saskatchewan. They had been addressing this issue, hon. member. They're quite satisfied now that the uranium contamination has stabilized, and their own studies have indicated that there is no contamination beyond about 100 metres from shore. That is part of the problem, of course. We've expanded the northern river basin study to look at the entire area within Lake Athabasca and beyond to see whether there is any other kind of contamination, and we'll be dealing with our studies and also looking at the Saskatchewan studies on an ongoing basis.

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Speaker, listening to the hon. minister, I appreciate that response. I have a bit of a concern because while he says a "thorough report" with regards to a stabilized area, I would rather have heard him say that there would be a firm commitment that there's no endangerment to fish and wildlife. Can he provide that commitment, or would, then, the minister of Saskatchewan provide that commitment or undertaking in writing?

MR. EVANS: Thanks. Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question. The attitude of Saskatchewan on this is to ensure that stabilization is met in the long term. There could be atmospheric conditions, there could be surface conditions that could impact that stability, so Saskatchewan is working right now with the federal government to try to access funds that would see the site stabilized on a permanent basis so that we can ensure that over the long term there will be no impact to any of our aquatic life and as well, because of that, to the people who depend on Lake Athabasca. I'm pleased with that kind of a commitment. I know that the federal government is looking at that very carefully. As well, they recognize that it's an important issue. We will continue with our own studies and the northern river basin study on both fish, core samples, and the water samples to ensure that there is no contamination beyond that very narrow band that Saskatchewan has indicated to us into the province of Alberta.

Edmonton Oilers

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Speaker, the morning after the Premier told the corporate elite at his \$300 a plate dinner about his plans to tax sick people in the province of Alberta, our Premier meets with a representative of Mr. Peter Pocklington in Calgary, and he decides to announce that he's going to subsidize Mr. Pocklington with scarce lottery dollars which would otherwise go to soccer fields, community halls, the CNIB, and other worthwhile organizations. The indications are that Mr. Pocklington wants the province of Alberta to build luxury sky-boxes, maybe for the same people who go to the \$300 a plate dinners and hear about the plans to tax the sick. Well, I'd like to know what happened, because two weeks ago the Premier said in *Hansard*, "We have no intentions of becoming financially involved with Peter Pocklington relative to the Oilers situation." I would like the minister responsible for lotteries to explain. In view of the fact that I thought the Legislature now controls lotteries and in view of the fact that the government still hasn't learned its lessons dealing with Peter Pocklington, will he ensure that that vote comes to this Assembly before a commitment is made and before the next election?

MR. KOWALSKI: More importantly than the latter part of the statement, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for me to correct the assumption that the hon. member had in the first part of his question. There's absolutely no change in the position of the government of Alberta from what the Premier had indicated in this Assembly some days ago to what the Premier said today. The government of Alberta is not doing a deal with Mr. Peter Pocklington, period.

MR. McINNIS: I don't know. That looked suspiciously like Glen Sather who was meeting with him, and the last I checked, he works for Peter Pocklington.

Maybe I could try a question to the Treasurer, since I think he now controls the lottery funds as part of the budget. How can the Treasurer justify a four-year budget plan that eviscerates health care and education while they're going to put big bucks into Pocklington sky-boxes? How does he justify a budget that does that?

3:00

MR. KOWALSKI: Edmonton Northlands is a nonprofit community-based organization. It owns the coliseum in the city of Edmonton. In Calgary you have a Saddledome Foundation that owns that building, Mr. Speaker. We've had discussions with Northlands in recent years. Northlands wanted to deal with the

World Trade Center and do other things. Discussions that the government of Alberta will have will be with Edmonton Northlands, and if Edmonton Northlands can get some assurances from the city of Edmonton or others to do modifications to Northlands or the LRT system or whatever, we would sit down and talk to them.

Now, in terms of funding from the lottery fund, again that's another long shot by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, who wants to tie all these things together. Let me make it very clear: the government of Alberta is not doing business with Mr. Peter Pocklington, and we have no commitment to anyone on anything at this point in time, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Health Care System

(continued)

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that Albertans need some real information on this user-fee scene. A while ago the Premier was caught musing about imposing a user fee on doctors visits. After a big public outcry, as is his wont, he retreated, saying that he was simply thinking out loud. It seems after last night's comments that the Premier plans to impose another tax on Albertans, this time a users' tax on health care. He's musing further about how he can get around the Canadian health care Act to do just that. My questions are to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier now give us any evidence that this government has that such a tax will not restrict Albertans' access to service? Have you any evidence on that fact?

MR. ELZINGA: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the hon. member was, but the leader of the New Democratic Party put a number of questions along this same line to me, and I've already answered those questions.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Speaker, these are questions that Albertans need answers to. They are not the same questions, and surely if the hon. minister is listening, he would know that.

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the Deputy Premier is: when will the government find the political will to deal with the necessary health care reforms instead of imposing more quick-fix taxes on sick and disabled Albertans? When are you going to get to the necessary reforms?

MR. ELZINGA: I'm more than happy to supplement answers that I have given earlier in the Legislative Assembly, and let me do so for the hon. member. As the hon. member is aware – and I would ask the Provincial Treasurer to supplement this information – there were a number of initiatives within our budget presentation that the Provincial Treasurer shared with this Legislative Assembly just some few shorts days ago. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, within the health care budget there has been a statement made whereby we are going to consult with the users of that health care sector, because unlike the opposition parties we do recognize – and let me repeat it again – the importance of having those individuals that do rely on support services of any type having a meaningful role to play as to where those dollars are spent. We want to work in partnership, and that's a dominant theme of our Premier: partnership with Albertans. We are going to work closely with them.

MR. SPEAKER: Innisfail, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Social Assistance

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Family and Social Services. As part of welfare reform I understand that the public works corps was to be created to provide on-the-job training to welfare recipients. My question to the minister: has the public works corps project been set up yet?

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to indicate to this Assembly that, you know, setting up a public works corps is not the ideal way of employing people. The ideal way would be to have jobs for everybody in private industry, and that is still our target. But in the interim the alternative is the public works corps, and it's a process that nonprofit organizations, municipalities, Metis settlements, and others can utilize. To date this program has been very, very popular. We have a lot of interest, in fact, a lot of applications in place.

We have already commenced one project in Edmonton with the Mennonite Central Committee. I believe the project is small. It only employees 18 people. They are planting over 80,000 seedlings around the city of Edmonton in that project, Mr. Speaker. The interesting part of that process was that out of 18 jobs, over 42 people applied for those positions.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, Innisfail.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary to the minister is: how will these people be paid? Will they remain on any benefits from welfare?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to indicate to the hon. member and this Assembly again that the ideal way of course is to place people in private-industry jobs and training to be paid by private industry, but in this particular case the funds will be provided by the government and in some cases topped off by the municipalities and the nonprofit organizations and the native organizations. The people will be paid an hourly wage, and in cases where supplements are required financially, they will be provided. In cases where transitional medical benefits are required, they will also be provided.

I'd just like to advise this House also that since the reforms were announced recently, the caseload in my department has dropped by 3,000 already.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Strathcona.

Public Works Budget Information

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Deputy Premier's limited distribution of details of capital spending to Conservative candidates raises issues entirely apart from the contempt. The information which the Deputy Premier provided clearly indicates the spending details are in relation to new constituencies created under the electoral boundaries Act, 1993, constituencies which have no legal basis until the election is called. To the Deputy Premier: how can the Deputy Premier contend that the provision of this information to Conservative incumbents in the new ridings was nonpartisan and not politically motivated?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, as the Speaker is aware, perhaps not all members are aware, I certainly did provide to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona copies of pages from my ministerial briefing book. He has them. I've given them to him. What was provided was information from my ministerial briefing book that

I have said in the past I would provide on a discretionary basis to those who would ask. I also indicated yesterday in *Hansard* that I would be prepared to deal with the matter of extending some further information as well. I simply don't understand the merit of the question. This matter was dealt with yesterday. Perhaps there's something more here that will come.

MR. MARTIN: You were in contempt, Ken.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is yelling. The citizen in the province doesn't understand that. What the Leader of the Opposition is yelling has to do with contempt, but I clearly heard the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona say that his question has nothing to do with contempt. My difficulty is that I'm not sure what the question does deal with.

MR. SPEAKER: On the supplementary, and it's a question. We're not dealing with yesterday's decision of the House.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Speaker, that is the point.

Contrary to recent rulings by the Ethics Commissioner, the provision of this information was, I submit, clearly intended to be used by candidates to facilitate their re-election. The facts admit of no other explanation for the limited distribution of this type of information in this format at this time. To the Deputy Premier: does the Deputy Premier think it appropriate or ethical to use taxpayer dollars and public employees to prepare material that is undeniably designed to assist in the re-election of incumbent Conservative candidates?

Speaker's Ruling Item Previously Decided

MR. SPEAKER: The matter was dealt with by the House yesterday. [interjections] Order. [interjections] Order. I will now continue where I left off. Edmonton-Strathcona has served notice that the matter is to be dealt with again later this afternoon. [interjections] Order. Order.

The minister may make a quick comment.

3:10 Public Works Budget Information (continued)

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Speaker, it strikes me that the statements made by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona are rather subjective in nature, and the hon. gentleman may take his own personal view of life in the way he chooses to have his own personal view of life. To be very specific with his question, my conclusion to his question is no.

Provincial Laboratory of Health

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, the history of the Provincial Lab during the last 10 years has been threatened by the provincial government, which continues to encourage the existence of and business for private labs. Recently the Provincial Lab employees were laid off and, by the good graces of somebody, rehired by the University of Alberta, under whose authority the lab is now subsumed, but there are no promises for continued employment for those workers at the Provincial Lab. My question is to the Provincial Treasurer. He's so concerned about controlling spending. I'd like to get a commitment from the Provincial Treasurer for his four-year plan and that is this: that he will continue to support increased use of the Provincial Lab, which

provides cost-effective services, and reduce the use of private labs, which cost the Alberta taxpayers a lot more money.

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, that is a detailed question that the Minister of Health would more appropriately be able to answer, and I'll take the question as notice and ask her to provide that information to the member when she returns to the House.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Speaker, if he's taking things on notice, perhaps he'll take another question for the minister. The Provincial Lab is a very cost-efficient organization, which used to have a very good and specific mandate which has been eroded. Will the government commit to reinstating the mandate of the Provincial Lab to ensure that Alberta taxpayers are going to get the best deal possible by continued and escalating use of the Provincial Lab and reduced use of for-profit private labs?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, as to the hon. member's specific question, I can assure her that the Minister of Health, when she returns to the Assembly, will be able to provide her with the information that she needs.

I want to make it clear to the hon. member across the way that we have spelled out in our budget a four-year plan to balance the budget. That is going to require some difficult decisions by this Chamber, but it's also going to require some difficult decisions by those in the health care community. What those people have told us loud and clear, Mr. Speaker, is that they want to be part of making those difficult decisions. I think of the president of the children's hospital in Calgary. I think of the chairman of the board of the Calgary General hospital. I think of the chairman of the University of Alberta hospital board. All of those people have informed us that they see that there are savings to be made in the health care system, and they want to be part of making those savings decisions, not only to be able to help contribute to eliminating the deficit but more importantly so that we don't overconsume the assets that we have now to ensure that there is a quality health care system available for future generations of Albertans years and years down the road.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Buffalo.

Offenders Programs

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice in this province has made much of his commitment to making our community safer, yet in his own department's estimates we see no increase in support to victims whatsoever, and we see a decrease of almost 7 percent in the budget for jails and community programs for offenders. In the absence of the Minister of Justice, I put this question to the Provincial Treasurer: if you are reducing dollars for institutions and you're not increasing on the other hand support for community programming, why shouldn't Albertans conclude that this government has no real plan to deal with offenders?

MR. DINNING: Mr. Speaker, I would defer that question to the Acting Attorney General.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I'll take the question as a matter of notice. I'll also state that the estimates of this will be dealt with in due course, and the hon. member will have ample time to discuss it at that time. I might also add that the Minister of Justice has spent long and arduous hours working on a budget to deliver the

services to Albertans to the best of his ability and yet meet fiscal responsibilities and not raise taxes.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Albertans are waiting with bated breath for the rest of the details to be revealed. In the meantime, there are on any given day in Alberta approximately 10,000 offenders either in provincial institutions or under some kind of conditional release. What provision is there in this budget to reduce that number?

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, again I'll take that as a matter of notice. On any given day there are close to 14,000 to 17,000 individuals on some form of court disposition, and the Department of Justice

has been working, again, long and arduously to find ways and means for alternative measures. I ask the hon. member if he has any suggestions to the Minister of Justice, which I'll relay to him when he comes back, please bring them forward rather than criticizing without suggestions for solutions.

MR. SPEAKER: Smoky River, followed by Edmonton-Belmont.

Honey Industry

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister of agriculture. In the years 1988-89 the honeybee-keeping industry in Alberta was severely negatively impacted by the closure of the American border, which allowed access to queen bees as well as to packaged bees. This closure came about as a result of the Varroa infestation and came about as a regulatory change to the Health of Animals Act. Since that time, the Alberta Beekeepers Association with the assistance of the Alberta government has lobbied very hard the federal government to access an alternative source, and that was the source that, indeed, comes from Hawaii. It is my understanding that this spring the source of bees was made available from Hawaii. Could the minister enlighten my constituents as well as all Albertans as to what successes we have had with the opening of the Hawaiian access to the queen bee industry?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report that opening up Hawaii as a source of queen bees has led to the importation of just under 25,000 queens that are being used to rebuild our industry.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that in the May 1 edition of the *Canada Gazette* the federal Minister of Agriculture has indicated that he may indeed be considering the possible opening of the entire American border. Is this true?

MR. ISLEY: It is true that the federal minister has gazetted his intent to reopen the American border and is asking for input from the industry on that matter. I think it's also true that a large part of the industry is not comfortable with reopening the 49th parallel. I believe that with the success we had this year with Hawaii and with the growth potential that exists over there for them to provide what we know are Varroa-free bees, we possibly shouldn't get in too big of a rush on the 49th parallel.

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Belmont.

Workers' Compensation Board

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 3 a representative of the terminated workers from the Workers' Compensation Board contacted the Minister of Labour's office to seek a meeting to discuss what's been going on at the board. On May 4 the minister's office responded by saying: there will be no meeting; the minister is too busy. I can appreciate that the minister is busy having to defend this government's record, even though their record is pretty damning, but it doesn't forgive his ministerial responsibilities. Given all of the concerns that I've expressed in the Legislative Assembly this spring, I'd ask the minister to explain why he has no time to meet with these former workers to review their details and documentation, which he claimed in this Assembly he required to address the concerns I raised.

3:20

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, in his usual style the Member for Edmonton-Belmont brings out half-truths and torqued and twisted information. There was indeed a request by one or two of the individuals who'd been laid off at WCB for a meeting, and at that particular time when my office looked at my schedule and saw that it was relatively filled from about 6 a.m. until midnight each night, the particular individual was informed that we would try if they wanted "in a couple of weeks," I think were the words used, to see if we could fit them in. So again the member opposite has brought forward half-truths, torqued them around to his own political advantage for cheap, opportunistic purposes, and failed to bring out the full picture.

There has also been a full and complete review of the situation of laid-off workers to make sure that everything was done appropriately. That review is completed, and I'm satisfied that the process was effective and was very detailed for the workers' benefit.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about cheap, opportunistic political motivation. I would suggest that the Minister of Labour has just fluffed off his ministerial responsibility. The people that contacted his office certainly didn't have that understanding when they were told that there was no time for the minister to meet with them. They were prepared to come with documents and to discuss the concerns that they have with the Workers' Compensation Board, and the minister turned them off. So if the minister says that he's got time . . .

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. member, we're in a supplementary. Let's hear a question, please.

MR. SIGURDSON: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister says that he has time to meet with those workers, I would ask the minister to tell us today if he will meet with them sometime this week. A very easy question.

MR. DAY: Once again, Mr. Speaker, the member goes even to defying the rules of the House in how he puts his question by repeating what has already been answered fully and completely by me because he can't progress any further because he realizes how ridiculous his question is.

I will also add, Mr. Speaker, that I meet with injured workers, that I meet with people who have concerns and have difficulties with how they perceive to have been handled. As a matter of fact, those meetings are often where we get the suggestions and the ideas to make the WCB an even more effective operation. A

case in point is the member continuing to say that the rehab division has been closed down, which is totally untrue. It has been blended with the claims services division so that the claims manager can follow through with the worker all the way.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's been shut down; it's been shut down.

MR. SPEAKER: Order.

MR. DAY: That suggestion, Mr. Speaker, which has made for a much better system, has come from injured workers themselves that we have taken the time to meet with.

MR. SIGURDSON: Nonsense. Nobody believes you, Stock.

MR. DAY: These suggestions that we do not meet are totally erroneous. As a matter of fact, they're false, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIGURDSON: Your nose is growing.

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting a Member

MR. SPEAKER: Order. Edmonton-Belmont, thank you for your seven interjections while the minister was trying to reply to your question, such as it is.

Three Hills.

Agriculture Assistance

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As all members of this Assembly are I'm sure aware, Alberta's economy is vitally dependent upon agriculture and its rural base. Yet net realized farm income for recent years is about 25 percent lower in constant dollars than it was in 1971. As well, farm population has fallen by about 25 percent in that 20-year period. In its draft document *Breaking New Ground*, the government says that it will use legislation and programs to improve agriculture and the food industry's ability to increase profitability. To the minister of agriculture: what does the government think it can do now that it has not done in the past to achieve this goal and improve the profitability of agriculture?

MR. ISLEY: Mr. Speaker, if governments have the political will to listen to what producers told us loud and clear in the *Creating Tomorrow* process, the best thing we can do is get out from between the producer and the marketplace and let him take his signals from the marketplace and respond to that marketplace. One of the things that we could certainly do is the continental barley marketing proposal, which the study indicated would bring significant millions of additional dollars to the farm gate. Another thing we could do is create additional flexibility in other areas and quit coming up with programs that farmers may be tempted to farm as opposed to farming their land and playing in a true marketplace.

MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary. Final.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my second question, then, is to the Minister of Education. The recently announced 8 percent cut in education transportation funding hurts rural Alberta, and local school boards will have to cover the shortfall or people may have to move to larger centres to have their children educated. What will be the implications to the population of rural Alberta in light of these cuts?

Speaker's Ruling Supplementary Questions

MR. SPEAKER: It doesn't follow from the first question, hon. member. I'm sorry. [interjections] Thank you. Check your references in *Beauchesne* about supplementary questions. [interjections] Order, hon. members. All hon. members have been in this House long enough to know the forms and so forth with respect to questions and supplementaries. The Chair gives far too much leeway with respect to the extent to which preambles occur, but surely to goodness the supplementaries have to flow from the main question.

We have a request under Standing Order 40. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, when I gave oral notice earlier today, I would like to obtain unanimous consent of the members to approve a motion to congratulate the winners of the YWCA's 12th annual tribute to women awards.

MR. SPEAKER: Forgive me, hon. member. I think I have a little situation developing here. I overlooked the fact, because of a few dozen notes up here during question period, that we have a point of order from the Leader of the Opposition, and I suspect that has to do with a filing earlier today by the Minister of Community Development. Is that correct, Leader of the Opposition? Thank you.

Point of Order Filing Documents

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. members, forgive me. We will revert to this point of order, and then we will come back to the request. Calgary-Fish Creek, thank you for your courtesy.

MR. MARTIN: I won't take much time of the House, Mr. Speaker. I guess under Standing Order 7. The minister as I understood it was filing a document dealing with some argument that she was having with a reporter. I take it that she felt this was important to raise in the Assembly. I'm just saying that it was an inappropriate place to raise it and then to go through the discussion. If she wants to make a ministerial announcement, there's a proper place to do it. Under filing you just file the papers; you don't get into the debate about it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

head: Motions under Standing Order 40

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 40 request. Calgary-Fish Creek.

YWCA Tribute to Women Awards

MR. PAYNE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated when I gave oral notice earlier today, I would like to obtain unanimous consent of the members to approve a motion to congratulate the winners of the YWCA's 12th annual tribute to women awards.

Mr. Speaker, we enjoy here in Alberta a fine and honourable tradition wherein public spirited organizations recognize and salute our finest citizens. The YWCA is certainly to be commended for their initiative over the past 12 years in paying public tribute to women of significant accomplishment in the community. I trust the members of the Assembly will join with me in approving this motion and in congratulating this year's winners: Nancy Betkowski, Cora Molstad, Doreen Ryan, Edith Cheriton, Linda Hardy, France Levasseur-Ouimet, Deborah Kully, and Alice Mah.

MR. SPEAKER: The request is for urgency to have the matter discussed. Those in favour of granting the request for urgency, please signify by saying aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The urgency request is agreed to.

Moved by Mr. Payne:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta congratulate the winners of the YWCA's 12th annual tribute to women awards. Included among the winners are Nancy Betkowski, a former member of this Assembly, for her contribution to public affairs and communications; Cora Molstad for her contribution to the arts and culture; Doreen Ryan for athletics, recreation, and fitness; Edith Cheriton for her involvement in business, management, and professions; Linda Hardy and France Levasseur-Ouimet for community service; Deborah Kully for her contribution to health, science, and technology; and Alice Mah for her work in the social sciences and social services.

MR. SPEAKER: Further discussion.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, please call the question on the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Avonmore to the motion.

MS M. LAING: Mr. Speaker, we welcome the opportunity to join in congratulating the recipients of the YWCA's 12th annual tribute to women award. We honour these eight women, who have contributed so significantly to our community and have made Edmonton and Alberta a better place to live for women, men, and children. We thank the YWCA for bringing to our attention the contribution of these women and, by doing so, focusing our attention on the work and the contribution of all women. For too long we have taken women's contribution for granted, taken note only when it was missing. For too long women were limited in the contribution they could make. Women have made much progress in this century and have still a long way to go, but society is better for women's increased participation. The women honoured by the YWCA draw attention to the leadership and contribution of women. In honouring these eight recipients, we honour all women.

So to the eight recipients, Nancy Betkowski, Cora Molstad, Doreen Ryan, Edith Cheriton, Linda Hardy, France Levasseur-Ouimet, Deborah Kully, and Alice Mah, we say thank you for your achievements and for your leadership.

3:30

MR. SPEAKER: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to add a few comments, too, on recognizing the outstanding contribution that these women have made. Every year we of course receive a list of those women that have been nominated and those that have been selected to receive this honour. I think if we go through the list of names here, it reflects a great deal of diversity. It reflects the true talents of the individuals involved, and again it enlightens society from the point of view that skills that can be offered by members of society are not to be judged as to whether they're offered by men or offered by women. They can be offered by

any member of society. This points out very, very clearly that women make an equal contribution within our system.

There are many, many fine people here that deserve the recognition that they did receive last night. I commend the member for bringing this particular motion forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: The matter before the House has been read into the record previously. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried. Let the record show unanimously. Each of the recipients will be notified with the usual format certificate that we issue from the Assembly.

Thank you, hon. members.

Might we revert to the introduction of guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

head: **Introduction of Special Guests**
(*reversion*)

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to the House today Mr. Harlan Hulleman, a distinguished member of the Red Deer-North community. His contributions would be too numerous to mention, but I'd like to say that he's been very significant in the development and the recording of the history of north Red Deer, the preservation of the North school as a historic site, and the interpretive walking tour of north Red Deer. Anybody moving down in that direction to Red Deer would be welcome to take part in any of those activities. I'd ask if he would stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Speaker's Ruling
Motion out of Order

MR. SPEAKER: A procedural matter arose very early in the day, and it was brought to the attention of the House by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and cites as oral notice to rise pursuant to Standing Order 15(6).

Everyone is well aware of what transpired yesterday and in particular what is found on page 2723 of *Hansard*, where the Chair did not rule in favour of a prima facie breach of privilege. The matter of contempt was indeed mentioned by the Chair, and in the parliamentary tradition the Deputy Premier rose and apologized to the House. That apology was accepted by the House and in particular by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. The request was then made to make available information to other members. The Deputy Premier also then immediately rose in his place and said that he would do that.

This particular form of oral notice today is invalid under Standing Order 15(6) that deals with privilege, and there was no ruling made that there was a prima facie case of privilege. Therefore, this is entirely out of order, and it is vexatious to the House. It's the decision of the Chair that it is completely out of order, and the Chair happens to believe that the member himself was aware of it.

MR. CHIVERS: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: You are not recognized, sir.

MR. CHIVERS: Standing Order 22.

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 22? Which section? Standing Order 22 does not help the issue, hon. member.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Written Questions**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that the written questions on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, I move that the motions for returns on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places, with the exception of the following: motions for returns 190, 191, and 318.

[Motion carried]

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

190. Mr. McEachern moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of documents showing the amount of advances through loan guarantees provided by the government to NovAtel Communications Ltd. as of March 31, 1992.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, recognizing that there are a lot of questions surrounding this particular matter – and certainly I have as many questions as anybody would, and I'm as concerned as any member of this House about the whole development of NovAtel: where it went and how it got there. We all acknowledge that it was something that was tragic in a financial sense and should have in some way been more properly addressed by those involved directly in NovAtel. We still have to acknowledge that the information being requested here, all of this information has been given to the Auditor General for his perusal and confirmation, and anything untoward is his absolute obligation as a separate, independent officer to report. So for that reason, since everything has been given – everything, all details – to the Auditor General, the government rejects Motion for a Return 190.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few comments on this. This debacle – the only way to describe the NovAtel mess – the loss of dollars here is the single largest loss on a single entity by any government anywhere in this nation. [interjection] Perhaps the world, the Member for West Yellowhead suggests. [interjections]

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Through the Chair.

MR. BRUSEKER: The motion for a return asks for the details of “the amount of advances through loan guarantees provided by the government to NovAtel Communications Ltd. as of March 31, 1992.” Mr. Speaker, we know that by that time the government

had, for the most part at least, ceased making advances through this particular corporation. But if we don't get the details – and we have a Minister of Justice who's talked about pursuing and a former Attorney General who's suggested we should hang on high any who have been involved in any criminal wrongdoing, yet from the Minister of Justice we learn that it apparently has not been followed up, that there have been no criminal prosecutions occurring, leading one to believe that there is still some activity there. The Treasurer has without any kind of an open tendering process given a contract to North West Trust for several millions of dollars for the collections of loans, total outstanding loans of \$218 million. We are not provided with information there. The Minister of Labour stands up and tells us that we have all the information. Mr. Speaker, that's simply not the case.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

This government has been quoted before as being the most secretive government in the nation and in fact has accepted it as a compliment. The former Treasurer accepted it as a compliment when he was given the title of being the most secretive minister of the most secretive government. Here, again, we have a motion for a return asking: how did you blow better than half a billion dollars? The Minister of Labour says that we have all of the information we need. Well, it's clearly not true. The \$216 million that North West Trust is attempting to collect is still out there in the wind somehow; we don't know with whom. When I last asked questions of the Treasurer in this Legislature in question period – Where is the money? How is the money coming in? Is any money coming in fact at all? What are the details of these collections? – the Treasurer looked stupefied, dumbfounded, didn't know what I was talking about, yet he was the one who gave the authority to North West Trust in fact to pursue this.

To suggest that the advances through the loan guarantees, that all of this information has been provided is simply not the case. I think it's absolutely shameful that the government would not provide this information to this Legislature and to all Albertans, for whose money they are responsible.

3:40

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here we have a simple request to get documentation of what this government did advance to NovAtel Communications under loan guarantees as had been provided to NovAtel Communications by the government. We know that the guarantees were provided. We'd like to know through the copies of the document the amount of the advances that were provided. I'd presume it would allow us to determine what the dates were as well. Now, that should be a fairly straightforward request. But no; this government is more interested in keeping this whole thing quiet: keep it just settled and don't disturb it and don't rock it and don't pursue it and don't ask any further questions.

Well, yes, the government should have been on top of NovAtel Communications. The Auditor General made that very, very clear, but when it came to being able to ask questions of the Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee only allowed him to attend once to answer questions and not again. So there hasn't been any opportunity to really pursue in any meaningful way what the findings of the Auditor General's report were and why he had reached the conclusions that he had reached. The hon. Deputy Government House Leader said that if there was anything

untoward, it would have been found out. Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General did say he did find that things untoward had happened in the relationship between the government and NovAtel Communications Ltd. They were forking money out the front door while NovAtel was forking money out the back, and nobody was paying attention. Or maybe if they were paying attention, it was all deliberate, and if it was all deliberate, it might have been incompetent, and if it was incompetent, it doesn't matter. Somehow we lost over \$600 million, and this government isn't the least bit interested in pursuing the matter one little bit further.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why this is being denied, not because of any of the fallacious reasons given by the Deputy Government House Leader, which were totally off the point.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, to close debate.

MR. McEACHERN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion 190 is a little bit out of date, I will agree, because it was put forward in the last spring session and since then we have, in fact, had quite a lot of information on NovAtel, with the Auditor General putting out his report in September of 1992. However, I don't think that that invalidates this particular question.

In looking at his report, I see it says here on page 62:

On April 19, 1989, the AGT Commission authorized the guarantee of bank loans to NovAtel up to an amount of U.S. \$340 million.

Now, that was '89, long before the NovAtel collapse came. Then it says on page 63:

On January 11, 1991, by Order in Council, the Province was authorized to guarantee NovAtel's indebtedness to a maximum amount of \$525 million.

That's out of the Auditor General's report. Now, it doesn't make it clear if one was on top of the other or if the one encompassed the other. It's true that the Auditor General has put out comprehensive financial statements for the years '90 and '91. Nonetheless, I think you could say that it would be hard to isolate out of the Auditor General's report the exact amount of loans and loan guarantees that went through NovAtel. It would not be unexpected that a government that wanted to put this behind them would put out that kind of information and give us an update on a regular basis.

It seems to me that the Member for Calgary-North West raised a very excellent point when he said that after the supposed sale that we went through last summer of the remains of NovAtel, there were over \$200 million of loan guarantees still outstanding in the United States, and they're under the purview of North West Trust Company. The N.A. Properties division, I believe, is supposed to be pursuing those loans. The instructions from the Treasurer at the time were clear that N.A. Properties had the right to put more money into some of those, shall we say, investments – to be kind to them – some of those guarantees, and some of the attempts to get into the cellular market in the United States if they thought that would help them get more back in the long run.

So in fact what it means is that this government through its N.A. Properties subsidiary of North West Trust, which the government owns, is still investing in the cellular industry in the United States based on the NovAtel contracts and promises made by NovAtel people, some of whom probably should be brought before a public inquiry of some major proportions or the courts to be held accountable in some way for what they did. They skived off \$650 million of taxpayers' money one way or another and took fat salaries in the process of doing so, and this government's saying: "Oh, gosh, wouldn't it be nice to sort this out? Wouldn't it be

nice to hang somebody for it? But oh, golly, dear me, I don't know what to do about it."

Well, one of the places they could start is by providing up-to-date, accurate, and specific information, as requested by the opposition. I think the government should agree to give us this information in the form asked for and updated through to 1993. I mean, that should go without saying, because of course this is a year out of date because they haven't allowed us a new Order Paper. We haven't started a new session; we're carrying on the one from a year ago.

[Motion lost]

NovAtel Communications Ltd.

191. Mr. McEachern moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the audited financial statements of NovAtel Communications Ltd. for the fiscal years 1989, 1990, and 1991.

MR. McEACHERN: I wanted to make a couple of comments. Since this motion was put on the Order Paper, the government finally authorized the Auditor General to put into the public accounts – and he did so for the year '91-92 – the audited financial statements for the years 1990 and 1991. So obviously it would be redundant now to have those two years' financial statements. We do have them in the public accounts.

However, it would be interesting to have the year 1989 and for a particular reason. In January of 1989, January 18 to be exact, the company Nova decided to get out of its half of the ownership of the company called NovAtel. Because they couldn't find another buyer at the moment, AGT decided, I assume with government agreement, to buy that half. So on January 18, 1989, the government became the sole owner through AGT of the company NovAtel and stayed so right through to the end of that year. In fact, it was in September of 1990 that they started the sell-off of NovAtel that led to the fiasco of the prospectus being inaccurate and the whole subsequent loss and mess that has occurred since.

3:50

Now, one of the things we have never seen is audited financial statements for the company owned jointly by Nova and AGT from the start of the company back in 1983. I guess the argument was that half of the company was a private company or something. We haven't really asked for those books, but it would be interesting to see the 1989 audited financial statement for Nova Corporation. This government used the excuse that for 18 days of that full year the company was not wholly owned by the government, so therefore they didn't have to comply with the Auditor General Act, which says that the Auditor General should audit the books of any company wholly owned by the government of Alberta. They refused to do so right through '90 and into the sale in September of 1990. We have not seen any audited financial statement for the year 1989, so that part of the question still stands. It would seem to me also that now that a lot more time has gone by, we might add to this question – and if the government were willing – to scrap the 1990 and 1991 figures because we do have those in the public accounts, but they could certainly give us the 1992 figures for the sort of wind-down, if you like, of NovAtel, which would show the present status with N.A. Properties trying to wind down the rest of the investments in this total disaster that the government has presided over.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, it's not a question of people not wanting to give out information, and it's not a question in this particular situation in regards to NovAtel of people trying to avoid things. Everything possible to do with this particular financial failure has been put forward, analyzed, and is continuing to be done so.

I think we have to recognize here that the issues are being raised by the member opposite under a section titled Motions for Returns. The purpose of that particular section and why it's a part of our Orders of the Day on a regular basis is to allow any member of the Assembly to ask for information that can be found nowhere else or has not been produced or just is not out there. That's the purpose of this.

You know, it's very easy, and I don't blame the member opposite for wanting to sort of keep this going, even though everything has been brought forward. There have been investigations, and it's very important to note that with the Auditor General's report that has come out, I repeat: the Premier has instructed that he wants to see every recommendation of the Auditor General's report implemented. This has been getting and will continue to get a thorough review.

I suppose if I were a member of the opposition, and I doubt that could ever possibly be, but should that ever be, I would try to use various means to keep things churned up and keep things burning even though this particular one is under severe analysis, as it should be, so that people can try and get to the bottom of things and find out how it happened and find out how to avoid it ever happening again. We all here in this Assembly agree on that.

The member opposite, I think, by his own words shows that this is somewhat of a superficial use of Motions for Returns, which is a very appropriate process for members to use to get information. It's a very appropriate process, but the member himself with his own words says that because of the Auditor General's report being out – by his own words, Mr. Speaker, not moments ago – his request is outdated. It's outdated. He said that. [interjection]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

MR. DAY: It's fascinating. You know, we have to subject ourselves constantly, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, as we have for a few years now, to the same speech, which he alters with a few words and change of names to protect the innocent from time to time, the same speech that he gives for every issue. We sit silently and endure it, not without some considerable pain. When someone rises to question the method that he's using, he comes close to going berserk here in the Assembly. I mean, I fear for his physical health. He's going to hurt himself with the amount of gesturing that he gets into when he is asked about his particular process. It's not unlike the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, the man from Principal, who goes equally berserk when he's questioned about how he does things.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's very plain here that the member opposite said that this is outdated. [interjections] There he goes again, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, talking about résumés. The whole world knows that in his own résumé which he gave to the public he left out the fact that he was a vice-president of Principal trust. He left that out. He's always asking for full disclosure and full information, and he didn't put that on his résumé which he gives to the public. It's no wonder he squirms at moments like this. I've said before and I'll say again that I'd like to leave that alone, but he continues to raise it. The media to this point, for reasons that we don't know, has left him untouched for that. The fact that he would deny the public the truth as far as his own

particular background, the media for whatever reason leaves him untouched. He's enjoyed a bit of a holiday on that.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. DAY: Thank you for bringing me to order on that, Mr. Speaker. I digressed because of the shouting, screaming, and shrieking from the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

The member who raised this question, this motion for a return, has said that it's outdated. But not only is it outdated, the information is available. It's part of the consolidated statement of AGT for '89-90. It's all there. The '91 has been given to the Auditor General. All of that information, every bit of information asked for has been volunteered because we as much as anybody want to find out: how does a situation like this happen? How did it come to be, and how can it be avoided? There's no attempt whatsoever to avoid the glare and the microscope over what's happened.

The member opposite should realize that Motions for Returns, this particular session under Orders of the Day today, is for information that just has not been brought out or is not available. The information is available for this particular question, 191. It's part of the consolidated statement of AGT for '89-90. It's all there. It's audited, and again I have to repeat: the Premier . . . [interjection] You know, it's interesting to hear. He can rave on for 30 minutes and punish us with his monotone and the same old speech, but when we get up, what is he arguing for? Taking away freedom of speech. That's what we hear.

So I will close my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by saying again that in response to the Auditor General's report and the Auditor General's recommendations, all the information on NovAtel being given to the Auditor General, the Premier's response and this government's response is: we will respond to every single recommendation of that report.

Now, for other reasons which I've already stated, the government rejects this particular motion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a delightful speech, to listen to the hon. Minister of Labour, because once again he's wrong. The Minister of Labour says, well, Motion for a Return 191, because it's been on the Order Paper, gee, gosh, we can't accept it any longer, as if to suggest that there's no way in the world they could possibly change it, as if to suggest they've never heard of a magic little word, "amendments." They may have heard that before, but I thought I'd throw that out there just to remind them that they can make an amendment to a motion if they don't happen to like it. In fact, we've seen it happen before. We on this side put forward motions for returns asking for information, and they say, "Well, we'd like to comply, but this isn't quite right, so we're going to make an amendment." I thought I'd throw that out one more time.

AN HON. MEMBER: Let's hear it again.

MR. BRUSEKER: Amendment. Yes, it's a good word. Unfortunately, they don't often listen carefully enough. I understand the Deputy Premier is hanging on my every word, and I really do appreciate that. It's nice to see that that's happening.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour said that all of the information had been provided through the public accounts once we had this mess come to the fore and everything was disclosed through

public accounts. That was true for a couple of years. He said that before that it was under the AGT Commission, when we had the AGT annual reports. When you look closely, and in fact if you check back in *Hansard*, you'll note that I asked this question in question period of the minister at that time when we had a minister of technology, research, and telecommunications. I said: you know, everything's consolidated, but there's a little asterisk, and it says: except for NovAtel. So in fact what the member was saying, that all of this information has been provided in one form or another, simply is not the case. NovAtel was not included in all of those annual reports, and in fact up until 1989 it was hidden. It was never provided, and perhaps this motion for a return today should probably say simply "copies of the audited financial statements of NovAtel Communications Ltd." period. Maybe it should just open it up to all of them.

4:00

This has been on the agenda for some time. The situation has changed since the hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway put this in in good faith, and the minister and the government have been operating in their usual lethargic and snaillike fashion and are finally dealing with this on May 13, 1993, despite this having been on the Order Paper I imagine for well over a year. So, Mr. Speaker, the minister's two primary points that he puts forward about: gee, we can't change this; it's not relevant; well, you can make an amendment - I'll put that in for the last time - and the other argument about the information having been provided in one form or another simply are not the case.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Kingsway, to close debate on this motion.

MR. McEACHERN: Mr. Speaker, not a lot to say. I did say all the remarks I had intended to at the start of the motion so that I wouldn't have to get up again, but just a couple of points that need to be made because of the rather extraordinary speech from the minister.

Also, just before I get into that, a quick comment to my colleague from Calgary-North West. The reason for the asterisk on the AGT consolidated financial statements in the public accounts: what it said was that NovAtel was not included in the consolidated statements of AGT, and that is true, but there was a separate section on NovAtel itself. The figures are all there for 1990 and '91, which I said straight off.

What I really resent is the minister then using that to imply that somehow I was being frivolous or silly in my question and in my request. That request when it was made was a perfectly good one, and time has overtaken two of the years for which I asked statements. I said that straight off, but the 1989 still holds, and there is no good reason why this government shouldn't come up with the 1992 figures now that so much time has gone by. Therefore, there is a certain aspect of that motion which is legitimate, and I really resent him implying that somehow I was using the Motions for Returns in some frivolous sort of way and not making legitimate and reasonable requests for information. I can't believe the kind of nonsense that he went through in the process of trying to trash my questions when I had already explained the limitations because of time that had gone by on what I was requesting. There is still a legitimate request there, to which he then uses the excuse that some of it is out of date to dismiss the whole thing. It is just a case of this government still hiding behind the flimsiest of excuses and making the most ridiculous of speeches to try to blame us for them not giving us the information that the taxpayers of this province really require.

I know that they're not going to give it to us, because he's already stated that, but I just want it on the record that I've never heard so much nonsense in all my life to try to discredit a perfectly good question put forward by myself in perfectly good faith last spring. It isn't my fault that this government chose not to call a new session and have a new Speech from the Throne and start over again so that we would update the motions for returns that are still there from 14 months ago. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite annoyed at the minister and the sleazy way that he decided to dismiss my question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member knows that the word "sleazy" has been ruled unparliamentary. Would the hon. member consider . . .

MR. McEACHERN: There's not a word that says it so well, but I'm sorry if it offended your sensibilities, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion lost]

Harrison Evans Administrative Design Consultants Ltd.

318. On behalf of Mrs. Hewes, Mr. Taylor moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing documents showing details of supplies and services, fixed assets, and other, including purpose of the expenditure, of the amounts as reported in the supplementary information to the 1989-90 public accounts paid to Harrison Evans Administrative Design Consultants Ltd. by the Department of Family and Social Services.

MR. TAYLOR: I'd like to speak to Motion 318 for a minute, Mr. Speaker. I think the public would like to know why the money was paid out and, maybe most of all, how it relates to the overall objectives of the department. What was this consulting firm doing that related or tied in to the objectives of the department? Finally, whenever you pay out to a third party, what good came out of it? In other words, what was the finding? What was the final report? I think it is certainly one of those intriguing expenditures you occasionally see that doesn't seem to have any relation to Family and Social Services. As I say again: administrative design consultants. It would be very intriguing as to how that tied into Family and Social Services.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Speaker, this particular motion for a return is an example of what I was referring to just moments ago: that the purpose of motions for returns is to gain information that has not previously been provided somewhere. I would suggest that this type of question here legitimately asks for that type of information, and I would refer it to the Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, I will accept the motion and provide a written report on this.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's the first class act over there in quite a while.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

Housing

243. Moved by Mr. Ewasiuk:

Be it resolved that in recognition of the importance of having an adequate supply of decent, affordable family housing throughout Alberta the Assembly urge the government to take measures to ensure that the supply of such housing is improved and that the cost of rental accommodation is not unfairly increased as a result of shortages. Such action would include legislation to compel landlords to maintain premises in a safe and habitable condition; a commitment from Municipal Affairs, housing branch to ensure the provision of low-cost housing accommodation; a commitment to co-operate with nonprofit groups to provide social housing with a supportive staffing component; the development of a provincial co-operative housing program; the encouragement of the renovation of industrial, commercial, and school properties into affordable quality housing; a program to promote the upgrading and renovation of existing housing stock; and the implementation of a tax to apply to profits made through the sale of nonowner-occupied residential properties or multiple unit residential complexes sold within two years of purchase. The Assembly also urges the federal government to lift the 3 percent freeze on growth of social housing programs of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and to restore the co-operative housing program.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As previous speakers have indicated, many of these motions have been on the Order Paper for some time, and Motion 243 is no exception. It was placed on the Order Paper in the spring of last year. The thing about this motion is that while it's a year old, it's still as relevant today as it was when it was first proposed.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, the motion calls for adequate and affordable family housing throughout Alberta; secondly, it talks about the need to accommodate renters to ensure that there isn't an unfair increase in rents as a result of inadequate proper housing for those people who require that type of housing; and thirdly, it talks about the development of programs to promote the upgrading and renovating of existing housing stocks. While the motion itself is somewhat lengthy, those are sort of the three areas that it tends to address.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of affordable housing impacts on many people. It particularly impacts on the poor and the homeless, people on fixed income, people who have a disability. It also impacts on people who are living in a home but perhaps can't afford it, the families that are spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent, thereby shortchanging them on things like food, clothing, and other necessities of life and in fact the education for their families. So one can easily say that there is a crisis in terms of the provision of adequate housing in the province of Alberta.

4:10

The other groups also impacted to a large degree are, as I say, those who are living in a facility but are having difficulty making the necessary payments because of the high costs. What this does in many ways, Mr. Speaker, is impact on their ability to go and seek employment. It is difficult for them to look after their

families. I think that when a family lives in a situation where they're having difficulty meeting their financial obligations because of the high cost of rent or, in some cases, when they are already in a supposedly more affordable accommodation – however, quite often that accommodation would be provided by a slum landlord – the environment in which the family lives because of their lack of ability to provide for proper housing certainly has an impact on that family on a daily basis and to the extent where I think many of them lose self-esteem and therefore, as I say, have difficulty in seeking work, caring for their families, and simply carrying on their day-to-day activities.

The problem also is another group of individuals who I believe are impacted by the lack of housing but perhaps more importantly by the lack of funding provided by our social service program. If there is a shortcoming in a delivery of services by our social service program, it has to be the funding allowable for shelter. For many of the constituents I deal with who come to my office for assistance, lack of funding for adequate shelter seems to be the major problem. The department simply has not recognized that shelter costs have increased quite substantially, and they have not increased the allowances for shelter for quite some time now. Therefore, this group who are disadvantaged in many ways already are now forced to continue to use their shelter allowance for things like food and clothing and other necessities of life.

Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the minister is not here, but I would hope that he will read *Hansard* and recognize this deficiency in that department's functioning with its clients.

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of a Member

DR. WEST: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is rising on a point of order?

DR. WEST: Yes. The hon. member is speaking about the absence of what minister in reference to this motion? First of all, I'd like your reading on a call to order for somebody missing from the Assembly, but if they're not missing, then . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: What's your citation?

DR. WEST: *Beauchesne* 481.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is absolutely correct that hon. members should not comment on people's presence or absence from the Chamber, but if the hon. member was referring to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs when he was here, that would be highly inappropriate.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I was not referring to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I was speaking about social service recipients. I was, in fact, referring to the Minister of Family and Social Services, certainly not the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I do apologize for making mention that he wasn't here.

Debate Continued

MR. EWASIUK: Mr. Speaker, as I say, many families because of their fixed or low incomes are having difficulty coping with the high cost of rents. I might also add that subsidized housing is simply not available. Anyone who has attempted to get housing, say, with the Edmonton Housing Authority knows that they have

a backlog, a list of some several hundreds of individuals waiting to be placed in subsidized housing. So there, in fact, lies the crisis: the need for adequate, proper housing for those on fixed or low income. As a result of their financial situation, many of these people are forced, then, to seek accommodations that are provided by the slum landlords. Here again, because of the lack of proper legislation in our landlord and tenant legislation, many of the facilities that are offered for rent by these individuals are not properly maintained, are certainly inadequate in terms of family living, only compounding the difficulty that these individuals have in terms of finding proper housing.

I noticed earlier this week that the Provincial Treasurer was boasting about the number of housing starts in Alberta, and indeed there is a fair amount of new housing starts in the province of Alberta. I've noticed them here certainly in the city of Edmonton. But, Mr. Speaker, that does not necessarily translate to the provision of adequate housing for the poor and the people on fixed incomes. The housing that is being provided by the private sector at the present time is really for those individuals who have much more money than those people that I'm speaking about. By and large, the housing being built is large, expensive homes, and in fact the private sector is simply not interested in providing low-income, subsidized housing. There's certainly not much profit in it, and of course that's the underlying motivation for these developers. In addition, there's no incentive for them.

Obviously, to get into the construction of subsidized housing, the private sector would want incentives from the government. They usually do, and they quite often get them. They want some tax concessions; they want interest rate decreases in order for them to be able to provide this type of housing. It's just not viable, I think, for that to happen. Perhaps the Minister of Municipal Affairs and housing may want to look into the matter of the provision of adequate housing through his department, because I do believe that the private sector is certainly not prepared to get involved in that at this time.

There are other things that the government can do, Mr. Speaker, to make it easier, particularly for those who need to rent. Many of the tenants in the province of Alberta are tenants not by choice but by design and by circumstances. I think many people would prefer to buy and have their own homes but because of circumstances cannot. So I think recognizing that, when you consider that half the population of the province of Alberta in fact are renters, we as legislators have really not taken into consideration the plight of many of these individuals.

At one time there was a rental tax credit provided to tenants, but that was discontinued a few years ago. We were very benevolent and gave financial assistance to first-time home buyers. We provided some tax shielding against interest rates for individuals. Certainly those are good programs, Mr. Speaker; I'm not objecting to them. But at the same time we ignored 50 percent of the residents in the province of Alberta who have to rent. There has been no provision made for them.

Last year I introduced a Bill that called for the appointment of a rent review commissioner to review the rent increases so there was some consistency and rationalization of rent increases by landlords. Of course, in this House particularly the government members voted against it and did not support it.

4:20

Another thing the government could do to assist the working poor particularly, Mr. Speaker, is to have a look at the minimum wage structure in this province. I know that on this side of the House the critic for Labour and others in our caucus have on many occasions called for an increase of the minimum wage that would

give individuals, the working poor, a decent living so that they can indeed participate with the rest of society in the housing industry. But no, this government does not agree, does not see fit, and simply ignores these individuals in this province.

Another area that I think needs to be looked at when we talk about housing, is women, again a group of citizens who, in my opinion, have been discriminated against to some degree by this government in its continual refusal to implement a wage equity program in this province. I know the government members do not agree. In fact, unfortunately, the minister responsible for women is also not one of those who is in agreement with the need for the implementation of fair and equitable wages for work that women do when they compete with men.

Another group of individuals who are also severely handicapped by the lack of government action in terms of housing are the disabled. There are many individuals who might be confined to a wheelchair, and there are those who are not in fact confined to a wheelchair but require specialized housing. Again, this government has not taken the decisions, the action that's needed to provide for these individuals. Through many agencies – through co-op housing, through nonprofit groups – I think there's a way that the needs of these individuals can be met, but the government continues to ignore or certainly not meet the kinds of needs of these individuals.

Inner-city housing I think is an area that requires a great deal of attention from this government, but we don't get it, Mr. Speaker.

I thumbed through the annual report of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, which we received the other day, Mr. Speaker, and I'll read one of their recommendations to the government. It deals with housing, and is "the maintenance of the Property Tax Reduction Program and the Senior Citizen's Renter Assistance Program." The seniors are another group in this province who, we all agree, have contributed to the development and growth of the province that we can now benefit from. We are providing tax reduction programs and rental assistance and so on, yet this government is moving in a direction of removing some of those provisions for seniors.

DR. WEST: False.

MR. EWASIUK: Well, you can get your say later.

Those are good programs that the seniors have enjoyed and hopefully will be able to continue to enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, the housing situation in this province is, in fact, in crisis. There are ways to improve on it. On April 22 of this year I posed some questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. We were talking at that time about the Mennonite Central Committee and their proposals that they have made in terms of renovation of housing units, institutions, and commercial buildings. They can be repaired and renovated here in the city of Edmonton. They've come up with a number. There are some 2,000 substandard housing units in Edmonton that in fact could be renovated and utilized for the kind of people I'm speaking about: the poor, the homeless, the people on fixed income, the disabled, and so on.

This group, the Mennonite Central Committee of Alberta, have in fact demonstrated already that they're very capable. They've been in the field since 1987, and they have done some tremendous work in the province of Alberta. I think they have some interesting, innovative methods. In addition, they hire the unemployed. They take people that are on social assistance and provide them with training in carpentry and home renovations. In fact, as I understand it, some 70 percent of the people they take into their programs never return to the social service programs. So I think it's a very good organization that does some extremely good work

that we should be taking advantage of. At the same time, while we're providing work, we'd also be providing housing that's so badly needed in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that this motion I bring forward is accepted or considered seriously. I have done it before, and I certainly will continue to do that, because I'm certainly aware of areas in my constituency, as no doubt there are throughout the province of Alberta, where housing needs are in fact a deficiency. There's a need to provide for rental accommodations, but there's also a need for legislation to ensure that the housing stock, the rental accommodations that we do have, is in acceptable shape so that people living in them are not subjected to the kind of demeaning environment that the slum landlords provide when they are renting facilities.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments I would take my seat. Perhaps we will hear from the minister responsible for housing. I'd certainly be interested to hear his observations. Hopefully he has some revelations to tell us about what he will be doing or is doing relative to housing in Alberta.

DR. WEST: Mr. Speaker, I do not have a long time, but obviously the sponsor of this motion is not ashamed of his socialist ideology and has not been paying attention to the past in the province of Alberta. We stand third in Canada in its responsibility to housing. Alberta Mortgage and Housing in its history has provided 110,000 units in this province. It's met 76 percent of the target given to it by the federal government last year and continues in its support to some 19,000 for renter assistance. In fact, \$32 million of this year's budget goes following individuals with rent supplements.

Let me give you an indication of some of the things we've done recently. The Alberta family home purchase program has put some 27,000 Albertans into new homes in the province in the last two years. We have gone and helped in senior citizen lodges and in other self-contained units to the tune of 32,000 seniors in this province who are helped in that area. Our community housing projects produced 10,687 units. We have rent supplement, private landlord contracts for 1,389. We have 204 public, nonprofit, handicap units in this province. We have . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. The Chair sincerely regrets having to interrupt the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) we are now required to move to the next order of business.

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than**
 head: **Government Bills and Orders**
 head: **Second Reading**

4:30 **Bill 222**
Ecological Reserves – Heritage Rivers Act

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise for the second time in this Legislature since the last election to present this Bill. I would like to say that I first introduced the Bill in March 1990. I would also like to say that unfortunately it remains a valid piece of legislation because this government has been so slow in adding to the list of protected areas in this province. In fact, it has been painfully slow. Now, as we thought we were approaching some resolution of the Special Places 2000 issue, the government appoints yet another committee to deliberate on exactly how this might be done.

Bill 222 would do the following. It would require that at least 12 percent of the province be designated by the year 2000 to be protected in its natural state. The Bill would also designate at

least one ecological area of adequate size in each of the natural areas of the province, and it would require Alberta to join the Canadian heritage rivers system.

With respect to protecting 12 percent of the province in its natural state, we need to realize the long-term importance of protecting the biodiversity of our province – gene pool conservation to avoid the extinction of rare species, allowing overharvested species to return to normal levels, maintaining diversity of species necessary for the health of animals, of crops, and of humans. Protecting the biodiversity of our province is significant with respect to habitat required to preserve ecological diversity and protect ecosystems. It's important with respect to economics. There's a scientific value in these kinds of protected areas with respect to research. There's a tourism and ecotourism value, and of course this program of protecting areas in our province assists in resource protection and resource management. Finally, protecting the biodiversity of our province, Mr. Speaker, addresses cultural and educational requirements with respect to saving the heritage of this province for future generations.

I would like to point out the emphasis that the government's own Special Places 2000 report places on this important initiative, and I quote:

Natural resources, ecological processes and our use of species and ecosystems are all interconnected. Our continued prosperity, even survival, is dependent upon striking a balance between the environment and economy. Protected areas play a vital role in this symmetry. They are the link.

We're not advocating a land grab, Mr. Speaker, but we feel that a program to set aside adequate natural areas of this province must be implemented as quickly as possible in order to set aside areas of Crown land in this way before it is all allocated; for example, in the boreal forest area, which is under duress from the point of view of the government allocating it for forestry uses. We must attempt through such a program to improve the level of protection in some areas that have already been designated in some way but without adequate regulatory or legislated protection. I note in that regard prime protection zones or critical wildlife habitat. We must attempt to encourage private landowners to put some of their land in trust for future generations and give them a vehicle for doing that.

We believe that a sufficient area of each natural region must be set aside to ensure that its biodiversity is protected, and we recognize the need to act quickly before sensitive areas are lost to outside pressures. Our target is to adequately protect at least 12 percent of the area of the province, Mr. Speaker. Now, there is a variety of competing estimations as to how much of this province's area has already been set aside under some form of protection. Several ministers prior to the current Minister of Environmental Protection have claimed that 14 percent of provincial Crown lands have protected status, but what they failed to note is that that figure included prime protection zones and other areas that are not protected by legislation and included national parks. The government definition includes areas, if you can believe it, where resource extraction can take place in varying degrees. If the purpose of a protected natural area is not to inhibit resource extraction, I don't know what the purpose would be.

Prime protection zones and critical wildlife habitat, which constitute about 3.2 percent of the province, do have some legislated status, but their protective zoning can be changed or violated almost and in fact at the minister's whim. I note the problem with the Cline glacier and the mining of prehistoric ice cubes.

The government's Special Places 2000 document puts the total protected area of the province at about 13.6 or 13.7 percent.

However, it notes that the area with legislated protection is only 10.6 percent, and I quote:

Many of the sites . . . included in the [government's calculation] are not actually considered protected areas because they are not explicitly managed to conserve species and ecosystems. For example, Forest Land Use Zones should probably not be included as they do not restrict industrial or consumptive uses.

Forest land-use zones, Mr. Speaker, represent .77 percent of the province, forest recreation areas represent .2 percent of the province, but they only limit access, trapping, hunting, and lighting of fires. They literally do not stop forestry, and they do not, therefore, protect ecosystems. If we then deduct these kinds of, quote, unquote, protected areas, we come up with a figure not of 14 percent but a figure of 9.8 percent. While the government has wanted to dispute the estimation of protected areas in this province by the World Wildlife Fund Endangered Spaces campaign, the estimates made in their 1992 annual report, in fact they estimated 9.5 percent. That is consistent with our estimates, supported by the government's own Special Places 2000 document, of about 9.8 percent of the province's land being set aside in some form of truly protected area.

What is very disconcerting, Mr. Speaker, is that over the last several years, even as the government has made some kind of motion and noise about beginning to improve its record in this regard, it has done almost nothing in setting aside additional areas of this province to be protected. In fact, from May 1990, when we first presented this Bill, until today, the protected area in the province has increased by less than 800 square kilometres, or about .1 percent of the area of the province, with the major area being the designation of Lakeland provincial park and recreation area. This is 713 square kilometres, and since August 1992 the government has added only a further 76 square kilometres. These would include 75 square kilometres in September and October of 1992 for seven new natural areas and two additions to the ecological reserve program which were very small. In March 1992 the government announced that Ross Lake and the Middle Sand Hills, now referred to as the Prairie Coulee ecological reserve, would be created. A commitment, Mr. Speaker, but they have not yet been designated.

Of course, this raises questions about many commitments that this government makes, and recently we've seen such commitments about balancing budgets; probably about as easy to believe. [interjection] Well, then they shouldn't have made the commitment to set them aside.

Only seven of the 21 natural areas promised at that date, 1992, have in fact been designated. We regret, Mr. Speaker, that progress has been so slow and want to note in that regard, to emphasize the point, that the Bighorn wildland recreation area that was announced in 1986 still does not have legal protection.

4:40

Ecological reserves, Mr. Speaker, are one of the major focuses of this Bill. The Bill would designate, as I have said, but to emphasize, at least one ecological reserve in each of the province's natural regions. Despite these minimal recent additions, and they are minimal, fully half the natural regions in this province are still not represented by ecological reserves.

The chart provided in the first report by the Special Places 2000 group indicates that we still have little or no representation of northern fescue grasslands, upper foothills, Athabasca plain, and Kazan upland, the latter two together forming our entire Canada Shield region. We have only limited representation of foothills fescue, foothills parkland, and lower foothills.

We're also very concerned, Mr. Speaker, at the size of the regions the province has designated, because they haven't always taken into account the needs of wildlife species that would live

within those regions. If those regions are not large enough, of sufficient size, then they will not accomplish one of the important objectives of the ecological reserves program, which is to ensure that species requiring that kind of habitat can in fact survive in the area of that habitat which has been set aside.

It's very important to note as well that the province, Alberta, was given only a D rating by the Endangered Spaces campaign in their 1990 annual report, tying it with Manitoba and putting it ahead of only New Brunswick, which was worse with a D minus. New Brunswick has since that time upgraded itself and has now been accorded a C, which is a response by a Liberal government to that kind of negative report. It seems that the government may finally be realizing how important some of these values are, Mr. Speaker, because we see a pretty good Special Places 2000 report, but once it gets to the political level, again the commitment, the wherewithal, the action to see that this kind of program would be implemented, and quickly, simply isn't forthcoming.

The government in fact now has engaged in yet another round of consultations, another task force, another committee which seems at best to be late – why couldn't they have set this up months ago? – and at worst to be an effort to delay the issue past an election while still trying to get some pre-election credit. Our main regret at this time, Mr. Speaker, is simply that the Special Places 2000 plan was not implemented earlier and, for example, before so much of this province's boreal forest was allocated to forestry uses. We need to set aside areas for wildlife, for more careful integrated resource planning to ensure that timber extraction does not jeopardize recreation and tourism and other important uses for our forests, for example, for the future.

I would like to point out that much of what the Special Places 2000 report is about was emphasized by the Expert Review Panel on Forest Management in Alberta in 1990. The panel's seventh recommendation – and I should point out that of course this panel was set up and appointed by the government – stated, and I quote:

As Canada and Alberta have already endorsed the principles of the World Conservation Strategy and the Brundtland Report, the panel recommends that the government immediately complete the Alberta conservation strategy, especially for the forest sector.

After this, Mr. Speaker, in the face of this report, the government went on to sign the AI-Pac FMA in August of '91, to sign the Sunpine FMA in July of 1992, to approve the Manning Diversified sawmill, and has given approval in principle to the Grande Alberta Paper project, all of this without even adhering to or making an effort to implement its Special Places 2000 project more quickly, to meet reasonable deadlines, and without even responding in many ways that were required to the Expert Review Panel on Forest Management.

So now when most of our forests have in fact been signed away, the government comes along with a document that recognizes the importance of the natural environment of this province, the Special Places 2000 document, which says:

Alberta is well behind Ontario and proposed initiatives in British Columbia, the Yukon and the North West Territories in protecting its full range of natural heritage diversity.

and

Public sentiment clearly supports the need for a comprehensive system of protected areas.

It begs the question, Mr. Speaker: why has the government delayed for so long?

With respect to heritage rivers, Bill 222 would ensure that Alberta joins the Canadian heritage rivers system. This system was established nearly 10 years ago. The first rivers were designated, I should point out, not in Alberta but elsewhere in this country as long ago as 1986. The new Premier, who was then the minister of the environment, in 1991 set up a task force to

determine whether Alberta should join the system, after his predecessor had signed a document saying that we would join the system. In March 1992 the Premier stated that he would recommend that the government participate in the Canadian heritage rivers system program. Don't hold your breath, Mr. Speaker, because it still hasn't happened. It's over a year later, and it still hasn't happened. Yet another commitment by the current Premier that simply hasn't been fulfilled. It always seems that he attempts to say the right thing at the right time in the hope that people will soon forget exactly what it is he's said so that he won't in some sense lose political points for not having delivered on yet another promise. He's stated in the Legislature explicitly that he would recommend that the Clearwater River be designated under the program. This of course begs the question: why have we still not joined the program?

What we need, Mr. Speaker, is action now. What we don't need is further task forces and further consultations. We need action now. There are only seven years until the year 2000. We must proceed at a faster rate than in the last three years. More than 200,000 square kilometres, a third of this province, have been designated for forestry management agreements. It only took 18 months to set aside the AI-Pac FMA that covers 10 percent of the province. The public wants conservation. There are economic imperatives – if I could put this in the terms that these people will understand – that underline the need for conservation. There are, beyond that, quality of life and quality of health imperatives that underline the need for setting aside adequate protected areas.

Protected areas are not just fossilized land. Some areas can have important economic implications; for ecotourism, for example. It costs little, it is a priceless resource on the other hand, and as was stated in Special Places 2000:

A systematic approach combined with immediate action is required if a comprehensive network of protected areas is to be passed on as a legacy to future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

4:50

MR. LUND: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to enter into this debate this afternoon on Bill 222, the Ecological Reserves – Heritage Rivers Act. It really amounts to an amendment to the ecological reserves Act.

I was a little bit disappointed listening to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark inasmuch as he didn't spend a lot of time on the heritage rivers but seemed to be zeroing in more on the Special Places 2000 program. Nevertheless, I intend to speak more directly to the heritage rivers program and to indicate what strides have been made in this province.

Unlike what the Liberals would do, we have no intentions of forcing this down from the top. We are making this a bottom-up program. I certainly will not be speaking against the Canadian heritage rivers system. In fact, I would like to commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for bringing this Bill forward and showing his dedication towards the Canadian heritage rivers program. I notice that this Bill is very much similar to the one that he brought forward in 1990. There is, in my opinion, a lack of imagination in the Bill but certainly not a lack of dedication.

Mr. Speaker, this government is supportive of the Canadian heritage rivers system. In fact, we are studying the implementation of becoming a partner in this program. I think the person that we owe a great deal to for bringing forward our involvement in the heritage river program is our Premier. Back in 1990, when

he was minister of the environment, he established the Canadian heritage rivers system advisory committee to study the implementation strategy and how we could join the Canadian heritage rivers system. The strategy was then sent to the Alberta Water Resources Commission along with other government departments.

The advisory committee's mandate was to review all the information available on the Canadian heritage rivers system that had been already prepared by the national board and to compare that with existing Alberta government documents relative to the program. They were also to study the member provinces' experiences as participants in the program and to isolate where there needed to be significant changes. Based on this information, the committee was to assess whether Alberta should in fact become a participant in the Canadian heritage rivers program and to advise the minister of the most effective way to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, maybe for a minute we should just look at the objectives of the Canadian heritage rivers system, and they're really quite simple. They are to give national/international recognition to rivers having cultural, historic, or recreational values of national significance. Designation of a river does not restrict activities along the river once there has been a plan put in place for it. However, this plan will manage and conserve the outstanding natural, cultural, or recreational heritage resources of that particular river.

One of the concerns raised about the program, Mr. Speaker, is that management of natural resources falls under provincial jurisdiction, and of course this is a federal program. But looking at the experience over the last 10 years in provinces that are into the program, we don't find there have been any cases where the federal government has attempted to control the process and move into the management of natural resources.

I think, as well, it might be useful that we put on the table that in fact there are costs associated with joining this program. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark did not mention that. The funding system that is in place is that currently the federal government will provide up to 50 percent of the costs approved for studies, within certain limitations. The first one that would be effected would be the provincewide study. Now, the federal government will provide up to \$43,000 for that study. Then as you look at individual rivers, there's a background study, and on each of those rivers there could be up to \$20,000. Then in the process you come to some nomination documents; there the federal government will provide up to \$3,000. For the river management plans and the feasibility study on each river, there's up to an additional \$43,000. The federal government also assumes the total cost of staffing the secretariat of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board and publicizing the Canadian heritage rivers program at the national and international level.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Now, in addition to matching the federal funding for the studies, Alberta would also be responsible for co-ordinating the Canadian heritage rivers program in the province as well as distributing information and materials. The department would also have to incorporate the annual water quality monitoring requirement for designating a river. That could be worked in with a lot of the monitoring that we are currently doing as it relates to quality. The government would also be responsible for costs associated with any development and operational requirements that might be included in the management plans.

The local jurisdictions have identified that they could very well incur some costs, and those kinds of details probably would be up for negotiation. Certainly there are things like constructing signs

and developing potential access and egress from points, including boat launches and that sort of thing. The enforcement support would probably be largely done by Alberta Environmental Protection, although there could very easily be some burden on the municipality to provide some of that as well.

The communication budget that would be required would no doubt come largely from the province, although the local municipality, if they were trying to generate and promote that area for tourism, probably would be injecting some money. We know that the province, through their various means of going broader, would certainly want to get in on some of that promotion as well.

Mr. Speaker, the heritage rivers program was initiated back in 1983. At that time Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta were the only provinces that did not participate. Since then, Quebec has joined, and we understand that British Columbia now is showing some interest in joining as well.

5:00

Getting back to this advisory committee that I mentioned much earlier the hon. Premier struck back in 1990, they reported back last May to the government. The number one recommendation coming out of that committee was that Alberta should become a member of the Canadian heritage rivers system. The committee sees Alberta's membership in the program as an opportunity to increase public awareness of the historic, biophysical, and recreational values of the major rivers. We can see where there probably would be quite a lot of opportunity created once the province became a member. I think it would certainly increase the public awareness I mentioned earlier about the value of our rivers whether that be in the historical, the biophysical, or the recreational sense. Because of this advertising, the tourism potential of having people coming to the area and being attracted to the area would be much enhanced. Of course, currently we have a lot of people going to the national parks, partly so they can share in the experience of some of those wild rivers. Well, that isn't the only place where there are very wild rivers, and probably with some designation we would see an increased movement outside the parks.

There would certainly have to be a local volunteer commitment to river management. I find that whenever you have in place something that requires a large volunteer component, that somehow brings the community together, so we would see some benefit there. Also, joining would certainly show a commitment on behalf of the province and the people to conserving these heritage values for future generations. We know that in many cases right now there are plans being done to manage and use the water systems in the province, so probably this would go much in hand with that. I am very familiar with a lot of conflicts that arise over various uses of the rivers. Of course, with a plan in place, we probably would see those conflicts being reduced.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the way we're talking about developing these management plans from the bottom up will once again demonstrate Premier Klein's commitment to open, consultative government. The whole process will be designed so it comes from the grass roots up and, as I said earlier, not from the top down. As a matter of fact, in the process we have designed, the local municipalities will have an opportunity to stop the process in many stages. The process put forward by the advisory committee – and certainly it met with a lot of acceptance out in the community – would see the overall study being done first; that would then go to the local authorities. But before a river could even be put into the system to be designated, a local group or a local municipality would have to nominate the river.

The first place it would go to would be the municipality in which the river is situated. The municipality, just on principle or

for whatever reason, could say no, but if they did say yes to it, then the local authority would pass this river on to the selection committee of the government. There would then be design plans put in place. Those would come back to the municipality, and once again they have an opportunity to say no. If they say yes, it would then move forward to the Water Resources Commission. The commission, of course, has six departments that are part of it: Economic Development and Tourism, agriculture, environment, transportation, Municipal Affairs, and public lands. These people are going to then have an opportunity to look at the plan for the river that has been chosen, see if it's acceptable, look at the implications of that, and then they report back to the commission. It would then flow to the standing policy committee on forestry and natural resources. From there, if it is approved, it will go to cabinet. Once again, there is another stop along the way. If the answer is yes, then it goes from there to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board. They look at it, another group of Albertans that has an opportunity to say yes or no. It moves from there to the minister. Once again, there is the opportunity to say no. If it moves ahead, the Heritage Rivers Board then moves forward to make the designation and the plan could be implemented. I say "could" because in this whole process, even though it is designated, the local municipality still has an opportunity to say, "No, we're not going to implement it," for whatever reason. So really when you look at it, there are about six places where the process could be held up and stopped because of public input being received.

Now, a number of concerns have been raised as we talk to the folks involved in this. Primarily because of the heavy role local municipalities would carry in this designation and implementation, much effort was put into making sure the municipalities knew what they were getting into. I think it's fair to say that generally the urban municipalities are in favour. We find more concern expressed from the rural municipalities. That is to be expected, because of course the vast majority of the rivers are under the jurisdiction of rural municipalities. Mr. Speaker, I believe there is enough public participation in the process that the municipalities are going to have enough opportunity to say no without expending a lot of time, effort, and of course dollars.

Many of the municipalities, though, have expressed a concern that they are going to lose control of development potential along a river. Once again, I guess parts of rivers could be designated. Through the studies perhaps you could identify areas that because of their natural conditions would not be suitable for development; therefore, the designation would not affect that. Some examples we could cite would be like the Grand River in Ontario. That one has been a focus of agricultural and industrial development since the early 19th century. Its historic significance has led to a nomination under the program despite the fact there are many structural controls along that river. Another example is the St. Croix River in New Brunswick. This particular river received designation even though there are two hydroelectric dams and a pulp mill along the river.

5:10

I think another protection the local authorities have is that the whole river, as I said earlier, does not have to be designated. You can pick portions of a river. I guess a good example of one or two in Alberta might be the North Saskatchewan and the Athabasca. Those two actually start up in the national parks. A system up there could very easily be designated and not affect the river sections down below.

Now, Mr. Speaker, even though I really do believe that concerns being expressed out there are very legitimate, it requires more

work. We have to make sure that those folks have a level of comfort before we join this program, because if they don't, it's going to be a failure. So even though I believe we will be joining in the near future, we do have to do more work. I say that we will be officially joining, and the reason I use the word "officially" is simply because there have already been a couple of portions of those rivers I just mentioned earlier, the Athabasca and the North Saskatchewan, that the national board has identified.

Mr. Speaker, there is another river – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark mentioned it briefly – which has been mentioned by a number of folks as a good candidate. That's the Clearwater River, and it is a good candidate. I think the first one we nominate outside a national park should be one where there would be a minimum of potential for conflict, and when you look at the Clearwater, there are a number of reasons why it fits into that category of one that probably would have a minimum of conflict. One is that the land adjacent to the river is virtually all Crown and undeveloped. Another is that the Saskatchewan portion of the river has already been designated. The nomination of that particular river is strongly supported by the city of Fort McMurray. The river has a strong historic association as a true fur trade route, and of course as anyone who has been up there knows, it has strong scenic and natural value.

Another one that would come to mind is the Kakwa River. Certainly it fits very much in the same category as the Clearwater River.

Mr. Speaker, I do have concerns about the Bill proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. One is that he's saying through his Bill that we need more legislation before we can participate in this program. Well, those of us on this side of the House believe we need less legislation, not more. Certainly we currently have in place a number of boards and agencies that can handle this quite adequately. We've got the Natural Resources Conservation Board, and it certainly could be used as a watchdog. We have now implemented a very comprehensive environmental impact assessment process in this province. Albeit I'm not sure where funding would come from for some of the detailed studies that would have to be done, certainly it is in place and could be used.

I also have the concern when we look at the Bill that it seems it's top down, and we have to come from the bottom up or it simply is not going to work. Another problem I have with it, of course, is the fact that it's outdated. In the process of getting to being a member of the heritage rivers program, we have already moved far beyond what the Bill is suggesting.

I think the hon. member would agree that the Department of Environmental Protection should be the lead department when Alberta becomes a member in the program. Given the experience and knowledge base available within this department, I would think they are capable of monitoring the Canadian heritage rivers participation.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for bringing this forward again and for his efforts on it. I think it must make him a little bit nervous to see that he is agreeing with the government.

Alberta's participation in the Canadian heritage rivers system is strongly supported by our Premier. The Minister of Environmental Protection also has indicated that he is in favour of it. Most importantly, we have consulted with the people. That consultation must continue, as we have identified many concerns they have. I for one will not support actually joining the program as a full participant until we have some level of comfort among the municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that we will continue to work with the folks in the municipalities, with the public, so we can

overcome the differences that seem to exist between us and the municipalities who are going to play such a very important role in this program. I hope it's just a lack of understanding. Maybe it's a lack of understanding on our part. If it is, I hope we're able to overcome that and eventually we will join.

MR. SPEAKER: Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is true. I don't think anybody in this Assembly needs to be reminded that there are plant and animal species in danger of being destroyed, and the spaces and habitat that support those species are endangered. In fact, many fragile and unique species are under stress because of development. If I have to explain that or make members of the Assembly aware of that, it's unfortunate. They should be aware of that by now. I must say the last speaker left the clear impression that we have no business trying to protect such species under the law of the land, that for some reason this is something we should accept as the natural order of things and we should do nothing to lift our hands to protect or save those species from being endangered. That's certainly the impression I got from his last remarks.

This is an important issue, and I welcome the initiative undertaken by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. However, I have to point out that Bill 222 in front of us is very, very similar to Bill 212, introduced some months earlier by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place. I might say that Bill 212 is in many crucial areas much better than the Bill in front of us this afternoon. Here are a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker. Bill 222 does not contain any penalties. I'd like to know how we are to ensure protection of various species and critical habitat. Bill 212, the Endangered Species and Endangered Spaces Act, created an offence to destroy habitat and species and put in some fairly strong penalties for people who contravene that offence. I don't see any offence or any penalties created in Bill 222 should anyone go about the business of destroying species or habitat.

5:20

How will crucial spaces be secured? Bill 222 doesn't contain any specific provisions, although the Lieutenant Governor in Council is empowered to ensure that by the year 2000 certain things shall be done. Bill 212, on the other hand, contemplates purchase of lands, lease, and expropriation with proper compensation in order to achieve an important public purpose and contains those kinds of provisions.

There is the establishment of an advisory council in Bill 222. It's just that, an advisory council empowered to set up round table discussions. If cabinet decides, it can refer matters for public hearings to this advisory committee – but only if cabinet decides. Bill 212, on the other hand, contemplates a far more proactive advisory committee. One section provides a clear mandate for the committee to conduct investigations, implement remedial programs, and advise the minister on the preparation of biological status reports. So it spells out a clear mandate. What is more important, Mr. Speaker, is that in Bill 212 there are two sections. One, it gives the committee authority to initiate the process of designation of an endangered space or heritage river, and that committee is to address that issue to the minister and the minister would then have to respond to the committee. So it is a very proactive section.

As well, Mr. Speaker, in Bill 212 an ordinary group of citizens could apply under the legislation and bring an issue forward, which the minister is then compelled to refer to the committee for further investigation and action. Under that Bill citizens are given

a proactive power to force these issues on the agenda in order to be investigated and dealt with. Those kinds of provisions do not exist in Bill 222.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the initiative. It's an important issue to be put on the agenda. However, there's another Bill already on the Order Paper, Bill 212, which I think would far more adequately deal with the issue that's been raised.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few short comments relating to the Bill in the time left. I'd like to explain a little on the problems we had in the Milk River Canyon ecological area and say to the hon. member proposing the Bill that one thing I found is that you can't force these things; you've got to take your time with them. There was an attempt made to force the Milk River Canyon ecological area through public hearings, et cetera. There was a really bad public hearing in Lethbridge. It was attended by a lot of people, and there was a real feeling of discontent. So I encouraged a group to get together composed of the Alberta Wilderness Association, local Fish and Game, local ranchers, and local sportsmen. They spent about two or three years putting together a plan to operate that area, and it really worked. They worked together, each gave a little in their ideas, and we now have an area we all can be proud of, we all work together to maintain, and we all work together to administer as a local small advisory board. It just shows that if you try to force something, you have trouble from the start. In an area like that that's so far away from everything and everybody, you need local people watching over it. You can't have somebody from Medicine Hat or Lethbridge trying to watch over it. You need somebody local, so if somebody drives in there and anything happens, they remember. Mr. Speaker, that's what really makes that kind of ecological area work.

I'd like to see for any ecological area from now on a local advisory committee that has some ability to make recommendations locally so these areas are run well and run with local input. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we should also remember that many of these areas are able to be preserved because the lessees in many cases have looked after the land, be it a grass area, well and with good husbandry practices. That's why we're able to take some of it and protect it. It's been well managed.

I think of the area they're working on now that initially they tried to call the Middle Sand Hills, which really is the wrong name, Mr. Speaker. That's in an area up near Hilda, an area called either White Rock Coulee or Bull Springs Coulee, which is part of the Hargrave ranch. The reason this area will be able to be preserved is because it has been well looked after. We have a local group now just about ready to start, again composed of local environmental groups, local citizens, ranchers, and the administrators of the land, all working together to try and make this work.

Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of actions that work in these ecological areas, not forced ones.

I beg leave to adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion, those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries.
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. DAY: Mr. Speaker, considering the hour, I do move that we now adjourn and reconvene at 8 o'clock for consideration of certain government Bills and orders.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]

